

What is claimed is:

1. An interactive computer system for an automated auction forum, said system comprising:

a database containing information describing an auction entered by a seller;

5 interface means for enabling a bidder to input a bid in said auction in response to portions of said information displayed to said bidder from said database; and

a database engine utilizing said information to calculate counter bids in response to said bidder;

wherein said bidder enters bids and said database engine produces counter bids

10 until a price is negotiated with said bidder on behalf of said seller.

2. The interactive computer system of claim 1, wherein said information entered by said seller comprises a maximum price, a minimum price, a real price, a description, a hardness of sell variable and a duration.

3. The interactive computer system of claim 2, wherein said database engine 15 calculates an aim price based on said information entered by said seller, and wherein said database engine compares said bids entered by said bidder to said aim price to determine if said bid is accepted.

4. The interactive computer system of claim 3, wherein said database engine calculates a happiness variable based on the proximity of said bids entered by said bidder 20 to said aim price.

5. The interactive computer system of claim 4, wherein said database engine tracks said happiness variable in relation to a lower bound, and wherein if said happiness variable falls below said lower bound said database engine offers a final counter bid.

6. The interactive computer system of claim 5, wherein said database engine includes a preset limit on the number of bids entered by said bidder, and wherein said database engine offers a final counter bid when said preset limit is reached.

7. A computer implemented method for running an automated auction forum, said

5 method comprising the steps of:

storing information entered by a seller;

receiving a bid entered by a bidder;

calculating an aim price based on said information entered by said seller;

comparing said bid entered by said bidder to said aim price;

10 computing a happiness variable based on the proximity of said bid to said aim price;

offering a counter bid based on said bid and said aim price;

determining if said counter bid is a final counter bid based on said happiness variable; and

15 repeating the steps until said bid matches or exceeds said aim price or until a final counter bid is offered;

wherein a price is found through a process of negotiation with said bidder on behalf of said seller.

8. The method as claimed in claim 7, wherein said final counter bid is offered if a

20 preset number of bids has been received.

9. The method as claimed in claim 7, wherein said information entered by said seller includes a description of an item, a duration of the auction, a maximum selling price, a minimum selling price, a real price, and a hardness of sell variable.

10. The method as claimed in claim 9 further comprising the steps of finding a percentage that said maximum selling price is greater than said minimum selling price, and adjusting said hardness of sell variable based said percentage, a time decay variable based on said duration, and a randomizer variable.

5        11. The method as claimed in claim 10, wherein said aim price is calculated utilizing said adjusted hardness of sell, said maximum selling price, said real price, and said minimum selling price.

12. The method as claimed in claim 11, wherein said aim price is further calculated utilizing said happiness variable.

10        13. The method as claimed in claim 7 further comprising the final step of allowing said bidder to accept or reject said final counter bid.

14. A computer implemented method for running an automated auction forum, said method comprising the steps of:

storing information entered by a seller, said information comprising an item description, a maximum selling price, a minimum selling price, a real price, a duration of sale, and a hardness of sell variable;

receiving a bid entered by a bidder;

finding a percentage that said maximum selling price is greater than said minimum selling price;

20        adjusting said hardness of sell variable based said percentage, a time decay variable based on said duration, and a randomizer variable;

calculating an aim price based on said adjusted hardness of sell, said maximum selling price, said minimum selling price, and said real price;

- comparing said bid entered by said bidder to said aim price;
- computing a happiness variable based on the proximity of said bid to said aim price;
- offering a counter bid based on said bid and said aim price;
- 5        determining if said counter bid is a final counter bid based on said happiness variable;
- repeating said steps until said bid matches or exceeds said aim price or until a final counter bid is offered; and
- allowing said bidder to accept or reject said final counter bid;
- 10      wherein a price is found through a process of negotiation with said bidder on behalf of said seller.
15. The method as claimed in claim 14, wherein said final counter bid is offered if a preset number of bids has been received.
16. The method as claimed in claim 14 further comprising the step of recalculating said aim price based on said happiness variable after a first bid has been received.